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LUTHER'S RELATION TO LUTHERANISM AND THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH

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An effect of his work which Luther had not foreseen was the rise of a church that was destined to bear his name. Such terms as "Lutheran," "Lutheranism," and "Lutheran church" were beginning to be used in Luther's time, but with an altogether different meaning from the one which they convey at present. In our day these words in the common speech of the people do not convey a reproach, or are meant as opprobrious terms in very rare instances. In Luther's days it was different; the terms had originated with the Catholic party and were used as terms of dishonor wherever the Roman Catholic church was confronted with the task of suppressing the new evangelical teachings. In the mouth of Catholics in Germany, Italy, Switzerland, France, and England "Lutheran" was equivalent to "heretic." In Roman Catholic circles the term has that meaning still, while in the world at large it has come to signify a religious party, a denomination, or a sect.

To Luther and his co-workers the idea was abhorrent that they were starting a new *Richtung* in theology, or founding a new church. The controverted question, which since the age of Protestantism has agitated the minds of many Protestants and, in fact, has divided Protestants into two opposing factions, to wit, whether the reformatory movement begun in the days of Luther was a return to old standards and a reassertion of the time-honored principles of Christianity or a quest for new standards and new liberal principles, still unknown and undefined to the searchers after them—this question did not exist in Luther's mind. Ever since the Leipzig debate with Eck, who probably coined the term "Lutheran," Luther consistently deprecated the use of his name in connection

with the evangelical principles which he and his friends had begun to champion.¹

In the confessional writings of the church that has been named after Luther the term "Lutheran" occurs in a solitary instance. Referring to a practice which had arisen among their opponents, the Protestant confessors at Augsburg said: "This blessed doctrine, the precious holy Gospel, they call Lutheran" (Apol. chap. viii, art. 12, No. 42, p. 225).²

¹ It is interesting to follow Luther's own references to the use of his name in connection with the reformatory movement. In the "Faithful Admonition to All Christians to Avoid Tumult and Rebellion," which he published during his exile at the Wartburg, January 19, 1522, he says: "I beg not to have my name mentioned, and to call people, not Lutheran, but Christian. What is Luther? The doctrine is not mine, nor have I been crucified for any one. St. Paul (I Cor. 3:4, 5) would not suffer Christians to be called after Paul or Peter, but only after Christ. Why should I—miserable piece of corruption that I am—have this honor that the children of Christ should be called after my abominable name? No, no, my dear friends; let us abolish party-names, and be called Christians after Christ, whose doctrine we have. . . . I share with the Church the one common doctrine of Christ who alone is our master. Matt. 23:8" (X, 370 f.). (All references to Luther's Works in this article are to the St. Louis edition of 1882-1910, the only complete edition—a revision and enlargement of Walch's—published in America.)

About the middle of March in the same year, after he had returned to Wittenberg to fight the iconoclasts under Carlstadt, Luther in a cordial letter to the noble Hartmuth von Kronberg, says: "We have to thank God with our whole heart because he still gives evidence that he will not suffer His holy Word to be removed, for He has given to you and many others a love for His Word and a spirit that avoids giving offense. This proves that these people do not believe on account of a man, but on account of the Word itself. Many there are who believe on my account; but those alone are sincere who adhere to the Word, even though they were to be told that I myself had denied or fallen away from the Word—which God forbid! These are the people that remain unconcerned, no matter what evil, horrible, abominable things they hear about me or my followers. For they do not believe in Luther, but in Christ Himself. The Word has laid hold of them, and they have laid hold of the Word. They disregard Luther; let him be a knave or a saint—God is able to speak through Balaam as well as through Isaiah, through Caiaphas as well as through St. Peter, yea, through an ass. These are my people. For I myself do not know Luther, and do not want to know him. Nor do I preach Luther, but Christ. The devil take Luther, if he can; but let him leave Christ in peace; then we shall also abide" (XV, 1670).

A month later Luther published his treatise: "Dr. Martin Luther's Opinion That the Sacrament Should Be Taken in Both Forms, and Other Innovations." He concludes the first part of his treatise with these words: "As Paul says, Gal. 1:8: 'Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed,' so say I, too, in the present case. In

(Footnote 1 continued on p. 514)

² All references to the Lutheran confessions in this article are to the People's Edition of the *Book of Concord*, Philadelphia, 1911.

There is a note of painful surprise, if not indignation, in these words. The men who, in the matter of their religious beliefs, had taken their stand by the side of Luther regard it as an injustice done to them that their creed is decried as Luther-made. They trace their spiritual parentage to another source: the gospel of the forgiveness of sin by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith. Luther has proclaimed this gospel to them, but by accepting it they have not obeyed Luther; Luther has been to them a guide to the saving truth, but he has not created that truth or faith in that truth.

This happened in the late summer of 1530. Being still under the imperial edict of outlawry, Luther did not attend the Diet of Augsburg. However, he was within easy reach at Castle Coburg, and his party at the Diet kept him closely informed regarding the

this and all other matters you must so firmly and surely build on the word of God that you would not depart from it, even if I should turn fool—which God forbid!—and should recant and deny my doctrine. In that event you must say: Though Luther himself or an angel from heaven should teach another doctrine, let it be accursed. For you must not be the disciple of Luther, but of Christ. It is not sufficient to say Luther, Peter, or Paul has said so, but you must feel Christ in your own heart, and you must be conscious, without faltering, that you have the Word of God, even though the whole world should fight against it. Until you feel thus, you surely have not yet tasted the Word of God. Your ears still cling to the mouth of a man, or to his pen; you have not yet embraced the Word with your inmost heart, and have not grasped the meaning of Matt. 23, 10: 'One is your Master, even Christ.' The Master teaches in the hearts of His disciples through the external word of His preachers, who convey it to the ear; but it is Christ who drives the Word home. Hence, consider that you are facing persecution and death. In those trials I cannot be with you, nor you with me. Every one must fight for himself, and overcome the devil, death, and the world. If in that emergency you were to look about to see where I am, or I, where you are, and were to surrender your faith because you were told that I or someone else had taught a different doctrine, you would perish; for you would have allowed the Word to slip out of your heart; you would not be found clinging to the Word, but to me or others. There would be no help for you" (XX, 73 f.).

To the friends of the Reformation at Miltenberg on the Main, who were suffering persecution for their faith, Luther wrote, in 1524, a consolatory letter, in which he says: "I do not like to see the doctrine and people called Lutheran, and must suffer to see God's Word sullied with my name" (V, 1283).

To his friends in the dominions of his greatest enemy among the German princes, Duke George of Saxony, Luther in 1528 wrote: "Luther himself purposes not to be Lutheran except as far as he purely teaches the Holy Scriptures" (XXI, 1093).

A year later Luther was compelled to issue against Duke George his treatise "Concerning Secret and Stolen Letters," to which he appended a brief exposition of the Seventh Psalm. The seventh verse in this psalm Luther applies directly to his

deliberations of that memorable meeting on affairs religious in the German Empire. Luther read the statement in the Apology and, we imagine, chuckled with delight. The statement, as we have seen, exactly expressed his own sentiments.

In 1537 the evangelical theologians were asked to draw up a statement of their teachings to be used as a basis of discussion at the Council of Trent. Luther wrote the statement—the Smalcald Articles—and inserted the following declaration: “It is of no consequence that articles of faith are framed from the works or words of the holy fathers. . . . We have another rule, to wit, that the Word of God should frame articles of faith; otherwise no one, not even an angel” (*Book of Concord*, p. 315).

When the Form of Concord, the last of the creedal declarations of the “Evangelicals,” was framed in 1580, the followers of Luther defined their relation to Luther in these terms:

We believe, teach, and confess that the only rule and standard according to which at once all dogmas and teachers should be esteemed and judged are

own work as a teacher in the church. Turning to God in prayer, he says: “Why, my hearty wish and prayer, my diligent teaching and writing, aim at nothing else than to see the poor masses of Thy people, who have been so miserably torn by sects and confused by dreams of men, scattered and straying like a flock of sheep, converted to Thee again, that by Thy Spirit they may know Thee in the true faith as their only Shepherd and Master and Bishop of their souls (Ezek. 34:23; I Pet. 2:25). And for their sake I still pray that Thou wouldest exalt and preserve Thyself and Thy Word through our ministry, in order that they may abide with Thee in the one faith. For I have not sought to have them cling to me, or that I should rise to honor or high station, but I have directed them to Thee, and made them cling to Thee, in order that Thou mightest be greatly exalted, and glorious and praiseworthy among them” (XIX, 542).

All these statements of Luther were well known to the Evangelical Estates at Augsburg, when they repudiated the charge that their religious convictions were founded upon the *ipse dixit* of one man.

A year after the Augsburg Diet, on Saturday after St. John's Day, July the first, 1531, Luther preached on the words of Christ in John 7:16: “The doctrine is not mine.” He said: “That is what I also say: The Gospel is not mine. Thus I distinguish my teaching from that of all other preachers who do not hold my doctrine. Accordingly, I can say: This is my doctrine—Luther's doctrine; and again: it is not my doctrine; it is not in my hand; it is the gift of God. Good Lord, I have not spun it out of my own head; it did not grow in my garden; it did not flow from my spring; it was not born of me. It is God's gift, not an invention of man. Thus both statements are correct: The doctrine is mine, and yet not mine. For it is of God, the Heavenly Father, and yet it is I that preach and maintain this doctrine” (VIII, 27).

nothing else than the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament. . . . Other writings, of ancient or modern teachers, whatever reputation they may have, should not be regarded as of equal authority with the Holy Scriptures, but should altogether be subordinated to them, and should not be received other or further than as witnesses, in what manner and at what places, since the time of the apostles, the purer doctrine of the prophets and apostles were preserved.

The document proceeds to declare the loyalty of its authors to the three Ecumenical Creeds, to the Augsburg Confession with its Apology, and to the three Articles of Smalcald, and then mentions Luther's writings to the following effect: "We confessionally acknowledge the Small and Large Catechisms of Doctor Luther, as they are included in Luther's works, as the Bible of the laity, wherein everything is comprised which is treated at greater length in Holy Scripture, and is necessary that a Christian man know for his salvation" (*Book of Concord*, pp. 491 f.).

Lutheranism thus becomes attached to Luther only in a secondary sense: Luther is no authority to Lutherans except as far as he has reasserted the divine Word, which alone is the *norma normans* of the faith and practice of the Lutheran church.

In the terminology of old-school Protestant dogmatics, the roots of Lutheranism may be said to lie in soteriological and Christological soil. True, the pathetic experience of Luther during his monastic life is strongly reflected in the cardinal truths of Lutheran theology. However, Lutheranism is not on that account an accommodation to the peculiar views of Luther. It is not the universalization of the spiritual development of an individual. Luther's appeal to the gospel would not have seized men with such a powerful grip if Luther's experiences in his natural state under sin and the wrath of God were not the normal experiences of all men who are sincere with themselves. Luther's sensations of terror in view of the divine anger at sin, his feeling of despair because of the worthlessness of all human efforts to regain the lost favor of the offended Deity, of the utter incapacity of the human intellect by its own powers to grasp, and of the human will by its own powers to submit to, the evangelical plan of salvation, are the typical phenomena accompanying every earnest quest for genuine righteousness.

"This blessed doctrine . . . they call Lutheran"—better than they knew the Catholic critics of Lutheran teaching had with this censorious remark stated the origin and the leading characteristic of Lutheran teaching. Historically viewed, Lutheranism is the systematic and comprehensive answer to the agonized cry of the human heart: How can I pass muster at the bar of God's justice? It is the restatement and consistent application of the Bible teaching regarding "the grace which bringeth salvation" (Titus 2:11). It starts out with human sin and guilt as a necessary premise. In the Lutheran conception the term "sin" embraces estrangement from God, in whom sin is not and cannot be; furthermore, the retributive anger of God which is felt in the accusations of the sinner's conscience; lastly, as its ultimate dire effect, the certain prospect of perdition. Moreover, sin, to be fully stated, must not be represented merely as an act, but as an inveterate condition in the human heart. Sin in its true inwardness is viewed in Lutheran theology as a habitual proneness to evil and disinclination to good, that is, to what God regards so.

The pleasure of God regarding what is right and his displeasure with reference to things that are evil are declared to men in God's holy law. This law is to natural man the direct contradiction of what he is inclined to delight in or to shun. A person may be the brightest genius in every other respect, but, when face to face with the eternal principles of righteousness, he is ever found to be a scorner of God and unable to understand the justice of God's verdict, viz., that he cannot grasp the things which are of God. He may, like the Pharisees in the days of Christ, be a moral man in his own and other people's estimation and may angrily spurn the charge that he is contaminated in his innermost being, unfree in his moral actions, and unable to love God with all his heart and all his soul and all his strength, or his neighbor, without any stirring within him of self-interest. But when he denies these scriptural facts he merely proves the reality of what he denies: sin has so blinded and hardened him that his judgment is become crooked and his will perverse on every question that has a bearing on his standing with God. Lutheranism subscribes without reservation to the Pauline

assertion: "There is here no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:22 f.).

At this point there enters in the saving element—grace. Lutheranism presents a plan of salvation which exhibits God himself as taking the first step toward a restoration of that relation which existed between himself and his foremost creature, man, in paradise. God, who abominates sin and has hurled his righteous curse at wrongdoers, of his own free determination makes overtures to fallen man, by which he desires to establish a union of love with man. "Grace" is that disposition in God which makes it possible for him to connect with the sinner. It is a peculiar manifestation of that goodness which God displays in many other ways; for instance, by his benevolent creation and by the numberless kind acts with which he governs the world. The grace of God brings God's goodness into touch with man, not in as far as he is man or in as far as he is puny man, but in as far as he is sinful man. Luther used to put it thus: By his grace God loves man *despite* man's sins, though he never loves man's sin. Out of this unlooked-for disposition of God toward the sinner springs the first thought and the possibility of salvation for man. God, not man, starts this business. God proposes to restore man, and does not wait for man to rehabilitate himself with God. The publication of this disposition on the part of God Scripture calls a "revelation" (Eph. 1:9). The record of this publication is the gospel.

With Luther, Lutheranism declines a view of saving grace and of the gospel that is totally at variance with the Scriptures. Grace is not to be viewed as something like the easy-going habit of an indulgent father, who is ever ready to condone the reckless vagaries of a wild son. Grace does not represent God as treating sin with indifference, with comparative complacency; it does not turn God into a doting old gentleman. Grace impels God to find a means for the sinner's restoration which leaves the claims which his justice has upon man, even in his fallen state, inviolate. This means was found in the person and work of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Saving grace, in the Lutheran view, is incorporated in the Savior. Basing on the declaration of Jesus: "No one cometh to the Father but by Me" (John 14:6), Lutheranism declares: There is no saving

grace for the sinner except such as he finds in Christ, the sole Mediator between God and man.

Because of his mediatorship the Redeemer had to be a strangely composite being: true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, in one undivided and indivisible person. Lutheran theology emphasizes the doctrine of the two natures in Christ and of the communication of the attributes, or properties, of either nature to the other.

As regards the work or mission of Christ, Lutheranism holds that the only adequate view to take of these is that all that Christ did or suffered he did and suffered as the representative of fallen man. Lutheranism is very clear and emphatic in teaching the doctrine of the vicarious atonement. It regards Christ as the Redeemer for this very reason that his works are substituted in the divine account for the works which man had failed to do; and his pains and death for the eternal torments which man had merited by his wrongdoing. The entire redemptive work was achieved by the God-man, each of his natures contributing toward the grand effect of man's reconciliation with God that which was peculiar to it.

The salvation which Jesus Christ wrought by his holy living and innocent death has been stamped with the divine approval by the resurrection of Christ. Luther made very much of the unmistakable emphasis which the New Testament places on the Easter miracle. He points, with Paul, to the resurrection of Christ as the foundation of the creed of the church, whose cornerstone is Christ. To Luther the rising of the Redeemer has afforded a wealth of comfort in his heroic struggles. To the mighty forces of the state and the official church of his day, which were arrayed against him, he declared: "There is a Mightier than you that is back of this movement." In hours of despondency his thought would turn with joy to the living Redeemer, and to remind himself of the fact that he was serving, not the dead champion of a lost cause, but the living Head of the Church, he wrote the word *Vivit* on his desk.

The completed work of reconciliation performed by Christ as the sinner's proxy must be appropriated, as regards its saving effects, by the sinner, for whom it was performed. To bring about this

appropriation, God has created the gospel for a conveyance of the justifying virtue of Christ's work to the sinner and the sinner's faith in the gospel as the means for receiving the entire redeeming virtue of Christ's active and passive obedience under the law of God. Lutheranism understands the term "gospel" when used in the strict sense as a doctrine that differs utterly from the law. The law states what demands God makes upon man; it holds out promises of reward for good conduct and threatens man with just punishment if he fails to do all that is written in the commandments of God. The gospel, on the other hand, states what God has done and is always bent upon doing in order to restore the sinner to a condition of righteousness in Christ, to reclaim him from the tyranny of sin, and to bring him ultimately into the life everlasting in a heaven full of joy and glory. The gospel lays down no conditions for the sinner to fulfil, but is a free, gratuitous offer of all that the sinner needs to be rid of sin and saved here and hereafter.

In Lutheran theology the gospel, in the strict sense, is not a historical narrative of the events in the life of Christ and the early church, nor is it the new law which Christ has laid down for the conduct of his people and the government of his Church, but it is a means of grace by which God seeks entrance into the hearts of men, causing them to understand his gracious purposes concerning them, to conceive a delight in such knowledge, to acquiesce in his declaration of peace, and to appropriate the work of Christ as their own, because rendered in their place. From the gospel there issue strong persuasive influences which attack the natural deadness, coldness, indifference of the sinner's heart over and against affairs of the soul and spiritual matters. The power of rescuing love is through the gospel exerted upon the human reason to make it grasp the divine logic of the plan of salvation which runs counter to all human logic, to overcome all its finely thought-out, reasonable scruples about the correctness, the validity, the ethics of this plan. This same power lays hold upon the human will, which is full of self-conceit and pride and stubbornly opposes the proposition that man can be saved only, like a beggar, by the mercy of God. It overcomes the reluctance, the diffidence, the doubts of the alarmed sinner, who imagines he is not worthy of such grace, and makes out of the unwilling, men joyously willing to accept the pardon of their Father in Heaven.

The promises of the gospel have been attached also to certain ordinances of Christ's appointment in which there is, besides the spoken word of grace, some visible element connected with the word. These ordinances—baptism and the Lord's Supper—are meant for the same purpose as the written or spoken word—they convey, confirm, and seal saving grace to the sinner. God seeks entrance into the human heart by every possible means of approach—through the eye, the ear, the touch, the taste. He makes multitudinous efforts to win the sinner's affection.

At no time, indeed, does God exert his irresistible power of majesty, compelling the sinner by main force to yield to his entreaties. This would be a self-contradiction, and would leave the sinner, convinced against his will, to be of the same opinion still. But there is a mighty moral suasion exerted through the gospel and the gospel ordinances. The sinner who comes under this influence feels that "the word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).

This teaching—viz., that there is no saving grace without the means of grace—is the fruit of Luther's earnest theological labors in his many controversies with the theologians of Rome, especially Erasmus, and with the fanatics—the *Schwaermer*—of his day. It has given back to the world of sinners the old apostolic conception of what the gospel really is. In Lutheran teaching the gospel does not merely open up a possibility for the sinner to save himself, if he will try. It does not demand efforts to be put forth by the sinner; it does not ask that he must to a certain degree of intensity experience sorrow over sin, that he must pass through the agonies of remorse and contrition according to a certain method, and form the resolution to amend his conduct. It does not tell the sinner that only after he has done all these things he dare hope for mercy in God and take comfort in Christ. Lutheranism, with Paul, emphasizes the fact that Christ "died for the ungodly," that God sacrificed his Son for us "while we were yet sinners" (Rom. 5:6, 8). Gospel grace in Lutheran teaching is never conditioned grace; it is the simple announcement to the sinner that God is reconciled; it is the offer of a salvation that is already accomplished, not one

that must first be started by the sinner. In Lutheran preaching the call of grace is issued, not in this form: "If you are properly prepared by penitence, prayer, and holy resolves, and are thus ready, you may come," but thus: "Come; for all things are now ready." That means: come unconditionally; come just as you are!

The correctness of this teaching is verified by the common experience of all sinners on whom the grace of God has laid hold. They all describe the work of grace as a conquest, a victory, which the gracious influence of the gospel has gained over their unwilling and stubborn heart. "God came, God saw, God conquered; Jesus found me, Jesus picked me up, I followed. I know that I have passed from death to life, but how it all was accomplished, I cannot state in minute detail. It is a mystery of divine grace to me, but that this grace lies stored for every sinner in the means of grace, and that the spirit which regenerates the sinner comes to us only through the agency of the word of grace, I am certain"—this is the confession which expresses the Lutheran consciousness of the basic soteriological fact in the heart of the sinner whom grace has reclaimed.

Every student of history knows that a prominent feature in Luther's teaching of the way of salvation is faith. He stressed faith to the utmost, for instance, in his translation of Romans 3:28. What is meant by faith? Personal faith, the act of believing, occurs when the intellect grasps the message of salvation and credits it as truth and when the will accepts this message as designed for the individual sinner and acquiesces therein. Faith establishes for the individual that right relation to God which the gospel declares to have been established by the work of Christ for the entire world of men. By believing, each one of the redeemed appropriates for himself the merits procured by Christ. He knows that he is credited by God with all the holiness and innocence of Christ. He is righteous for Christ's sake; Christ's righteousness is reckoned as his own. It is like pronouncing a criminal "not guilty" in a court of justice. In scriptural parlance this is called justification. Justification is the primal and basic fact in personal Christianity. It represents the spiritual crisis in the sinner's life. It is the passing away of the old and the advent of the new. It

restores to the sinner a good conscience before God. The justified sinner faces God with no dread of his displeasure; on the contrary, he knows that God is pleased with him. He is become the child of God through the adoption of grace. He enjoys a child's privileges with God; he communes with him, speaks to him, and is answered. He is installed as heir of God and co-heir with Jesus Christ. The distant future, his fate after death, death itself and the grave, and the final judgment hold no terrors for him.

An effect of this, which in point of time coincides with justification, is a moral change that comes over the powers of the soul. God and all things divine have now become lovable objects to the sinner, who before hated them. His judgment on the value of things is changed, completely reversed. He feels new impulses impelling him to action and gladly follows them. Life has assumed a new meaning to him; it is become a grand opportunity for service to the Redeemer-God according to his expressed will. Christ himself is become a living reality in the person's existence; and Christ's word and example the principle that determines his likes and dislikes, his every action. This life, too, is nothing else than the same faith which at first grasped the pardoning hand of God and always holds that hand. It is manifested in a thousand forms in the routine of man's daily tasks. It determines every view of duty; it prompts every holy, generous, charitable resolve; it develops a prolific activity along the line of everything that is true, everything that is honest, everything that is just, everything that is pure, everything that is lovely, everything that is of good report, everything virtuous and praiseworthy (Phil. 4:8).

Here, in the faith which day by day and hour by hour lays hold of the redemption by Christ and which fills the commonest actions of believers with a spirit of gratitude and love, lie the mainsprings of true morality, as Lutheranism views the matter. The victory which this faith gained over the world in the days of the apostles Lutheranism proposes to repeat. This conquering faith changes the face of human affairs in the twentieth century as it did in the first. Its silent influences go out to all ranks and occupations of men. In its outward aspect it still bears the image of its despised master. The pride of reason and self-consciousness scorn it.

Because of the visible forms in which this faith is exhibited in much weakness, short-sighted men again and again assert its decadence. But it proceeds quietly, unostentatiously, with its work of reforming, remolding, re-creating, men. It possesses perennial youth, immortal vitality, unconquerable strength.

It is one of the curious evolutions of history that as a name embodying a confession of religious principles the name of Martin Luther has come to be more honored in America than in the Reformer's home land. Since 1748, the year when the Ministerium of Pennsylvania was organized, there have come into existence in the United States and Canada sixty-five synodical bodies—all but thirteen of them federated in four larger bodies—which subscribe to the confessional writings of the church that submitted its first public statement of doctrine and church polity to Emperor Charles the Fifth at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530. The ministers, teachers, and professors in all these bodies, on taking office, are required to declare that they will regulate their teaching and practice by the principles laid down in the Augsburg Confession. By far the greater majority of them accept also the later confessional writings of the Lutheran church incorporated in the *Book of Concord* of 1580. In all primary and secondary schools, in the Sunday schools, and in the homes of church members in these bodies Luther's *Small Catechism* is taught. Knowledge of this little compend of Bible doctrine is a requisite for membership in all these bodies. Last, but not least, all these bodies have perpetuated Luther's name in their official titles—they are all called Evangelical Lutheran.

In Germany the term "Lutheran" as the official title of the church became taboo in 1817. This was in deference to a pet notion of King Frederick William III of Prussia. It was a strange contribution which the king and his Prussian consistory made to the celebration of the tercentenary of the Lutheran Reformation, when by royal edict of September 27th of that year the union of the Reformed and Lutheran churches in Prussia into one Evangelical church was announced, and the time-honored term "Lutheran" was dropped from the official title of the church. The governments of Baden, Nassau, Waldeck, and Rhenish Bavaria adopted for their countries the same policy as the Prussian authorities.

The Prussian decree did not, indeed, prohibit Lutheran teaching. Luther's *Small Catechism*, for instance, was retained in the primary schools of the state. But exclusive and distinctive Lutheran teaching was placed at a great disadvantage, and strict Lutheran confessionalism was depreciated, the Lutheran church being forced into an artificial union with the Reformed church. For that is all that the royal order effected—it declared a union without creating it. It brought together the indifferent on either side, both among the clergy and the laity—men for whom doctrinal differences constituted no grave scruples, who placed the temporal interests of the body politic above the spiritual interests of the body of Christ, and were so shortsighted as not to see that true religiousness, genuine active faith, can never spring into existence at the behest of the secular authority and cannot be stimulated by human devices, no matter with what degree of enthusiasm and specious spirituality they may be offered.

The Prussian decree, unwise in its origin, became plainly harmful in its operation. Lutheran individualism and separateness were being severely frowned upon in high places. When that did not suffice to put Lutherans out of countenance, annoying restrictions were placed on Lutheran pastors who were unwilling, for conscience' sake, to surrender their confessional position in doctrine to the centralizing scheme of the government—their official activity was placed under police surveillance. Ultimately, even imprisonment and banishment were applied to these Lutheran non-conformists. Faithful Lutherans in those days emigrated to America in considerable numbers and founded Lutheran synods in this country. Conditions in Germany became more favorable to the Lutherans during the administration of Frederick William IV, and the Lutheran church now exists in Germany in a number of "free churches," independent of state control. In 1868 the large and influential General Lutheran Conference was organized at Leipzig. Moreover, there are pastors in the Evangelical state church who openly teach Lutheran doctrine. But the old prestige of the Lutheran name seems to be gone. Many nominal Lutherans, too, are known to make undue concessions to the non-Lutheran elements, especially at the German universities.

The events recounted naturally have had an influence on the Lutheran church in America. They explain, in a measure, why the name "Lutheran" has fared better here. Under the liberal institutions of the North American republic Lutheran consciousness has been free to exert itself. The earliest Lutheran settlers in America, indeed, did not come from Prussia—those who settled on the Island of Manhattan in 1623 came from Holland. The Lutheran colonists along the Delaware (1638 and later) were Swedes. The earliest Lutheran preaching in America was chiefly in the Dutch and Swedish languages and only occasionally in the German. Nor had these earliest Lutherans come to America because of restrictive measures that were adopted against them in their native countries, except, to some extent, the Dutch, with whose church activity the government at Amsterdam had occasionally interfered. However, the emigrants from parts of Germany, even from parts where the Lutheran church as such was still legally recognized, had tasted the bitter cup of persecution even before 1817. The Lutheran settlers in the states of New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and the Carolinas (after 1683) were Palatines fleeing from the ravages to which they had been exposed at home during the wars of the French. The Lutherans who were given a domicile near Savannah, Georgia, by Oglethorpe in 1731 were German Austrians from the Tyrol (Salzburg), who had been driven from their homes by the Catholic archbishop Firmian. Lutheran consciousness naturally had been rendered more intense in all those settlers whom persecution in their native countries had brought to our shores, both before and after 1817.

Another reason why the name "Lutheran" has been more loyally maintained in the New World than in the Old is because, as was partly indicated in the foregoing, the American Lutheran church has recruited her original membership from among the emigrants of other countries besides Germany. Large Scandinavian Lutheran bodies have grown up in the United States—Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish. Besides, Lutheran synods have been organized in America by former subjects of the Russian Empire, now Republic—German Russians from the Baltic provinces and southern Russia, Finns, Poles, Esthonians, Letts,

Lithuanians. Also the Austrian Empire has contributed to the up-building of the American Lutheran church—besides the contingent noted before there is in the United States a Lutheran Slovak synod and there are Hungarian Lutherans. In all these countries the Lutheran church has been for centuries an officially recognized body. In the Scandinavian countries it is the state church. The same is true of certain parts of Germany, such as Württemberg, Franconia, Saxony, Hannover, Mecklenburg, and Schleswig-Holstein, which were not affected by the edict of the Prussian king.

The body of Christians in America who are known as Lutherans can be said, upon the whole, to be sincerely and intelligently devoted to the principles for which Luther and his associates stood four hundred years ago. There have been periods in the history of the American Lutheran church when rationalism threatened to become dominant in it, and other periods when pietism seemed to hold sway. There have also been sad defections from the Lutheran standards by individual Lutherans and by Lutheran congregations in America; the early Lutheran Swedes have to a large extent been absorbed by the Episcopal church; in the early part of the nineteenth century the revivalism which swept the country at that time carried Lutherans into the Methodist churches, and, in general, a tendency to adapt Lutheran teaching to the tenets of the large and influential Protestant churches in America was developed in the oldest general body of the Lutheran church. This movement at one time assumed formidable proportions, although it operated with a gross misunderstanding of Lutheran teaching and was guilty of a plain self-contradiction; it denounced the binding authority of the Lutheran confessions and at the same time framed a declaration of principles that was to serve as the creed of the new party. It denounced true evangelical doctrines because of their seeming similarity to the Roman Catholic tenets. But the movement was short-lived. The Lutherans in America can be credited with having realized, even in periods of apparent retrogression, the importance of the fundamental principles of the Reformation—salvation by grace through faith in Christ and the inspired Word of God as the sole norm and authority in all matters pertaining to the teaching and practice of the church.

The cosmopolitan character and the splendid vitality of the Lutheran church has been exhibited by the wise methods which have been adopted by American Lutherans for the propagation of the Lutheran church under conditions that differed considerably from those prevailing in Europe. There has also grown up a distinctively American Lutheran literature that is increasing with the advancing years. The one grievous problem which has vexed the American Lutheran church repeatedly—the so-called language question—is being solved with commendable skill and in a spirit of conservatism, both in the German and the Scandinavian sections of the Lutheran church in America. The American-born generations of Lutherans naturally grow away from the languages of their immigrant ancestors, and thus the native English of America is being readily adopted in the public worship of congregations that formally were German, Swedish, Norwegian, etc. The only concern of loyal Lutherans in America is to carry over through these transition periods into the new era the heritage of the old historic faith proclaimed for the first time in systematic form in Augsburg in 1530.